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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Security Council
Sixty-sixth year

Identical letters dated 7 October 2011 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia dated 5 October 2011, on the seventeenth round of the Geneva discussions, held on 4 October 2011 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex issued as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 35, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Shalva **Tsiskarashvili**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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5 October 2011

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the seventeenth round of the Geneva discussions

The seventeenth round of the Geneva talks was held on 4 October 2011, during which the issues of security and stability in Georgia's occupied Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions and the safe and dignified return of the internally displaced persons and refugees to the places of their habitual residence were discussed. On 4 October, meetings of the two working groups were held, in which participants took part in an individual capacity. Deliberations were moderated by the representatives of the United Nations, the European Union, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and attended by participants from Georgia, the Russian Federation and the United States of America. Dimitri Sanakoev and the Chairman of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, Giorgi Baramia, took part in the seventeenth round of the Geneva talks. Representatives of the proxy regimes from Tskhinvali and Sokhumi also participated in the working groups.

For the first time, the talks were attended by the new Co-Chairman, the Special Representative of the European Union for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, Philippe Lefort. The seventeenth round of the talks was also attended by the former Special Representative of the European Union, Pierre Morel. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia would like to underline the ample contribution provided by Mr. Morel in forming and heading the working process of the Geneva talks and thanks him for his dedication, efforts, efficiency and creativity. The Georgian side also welcomes the new Co-Chairman from the European Union and wishes him success in this most responsible job.

The 4 October round once again vividly demonstrated that the Russian side and the Tskhinvali and Sokhumi proxy regimes do not intend to seriously consider the issues relating to security and stability and the return of internally displaced persons. Owing to the extremely politicized position of Russia, it is becoming impossible to achieve progress not only on the fundamental items of the agenda of the Geneva talks but also on the issues of a humanitarian character.

Still the Russian Federation refuses to accept the legally binding international obligation of the non-use of force against Georgia. And again, Moscow promoted the absurd idea that Russia is prepared to be the guarantor of peace and non-use of force in the region. Through this proposal, Russia strives to depict itself as the guarantor of peace rather than the party to the conflict which it actually is and which is responsible for encroachment on the territorial integrity of Georgia and for the violation of fundamental norms of international law and also for blunt violation of the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008. It is noteworthy to mention that all efforts made by Russia to stress its status as a "mediator" and a "peacekeeper" and to avoid the image of a party to the conflict totally fail. This approach is unequivocally shared

not only by Georgia but by the representatives of the Co-Chairmen and the United States of America as well.

The representatives of Georgia at the meeting of the first working group demanded from the Russian side that Moscow cooperate in the investigation of the terrorist acts undertaken by the Russian special services on the territory of Georgia over the past two years. Despite the fact that the Russian side was handed over the necessary documentation, the Georgian side has not yet received a formal answer to its legitimate request.

The first working group discussed specific steps that would contribute to the establishment of an international mechanism of stability in the occupied regions. Georgia shares the approach of the Co-Chairmen that the introduction of security and stability in the Tskhinvali region and Abkhazia should occur bit by bit through taking concrete steps. At the same time, the final establishment of security and stability will be possible only after the provisions of the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 are fully implemented and after the Russian occupying forces withdraw from Georgian territory and international peacekeeping and police forces are deployed in the occupied regions.

The Co-Chairmen also proposed concrete ideas aimed at re-creating confidence between communities torn apart by the war and artificially created divided lines. An information session was also held on 3 October on confidence-building measures, at which the non-governmental organizations operating in the occupied regions delivered information on their activities to the participants in the Geneva talks. Sadly, at this stage, the Russian Federation and its proxy regimes did not turn out to be ready to support those ideas.

It is alarming that, in the second working group, Moscow and its proxy regimes refused to discuss issues relating to the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees. All efforts made by the Co-Chairmen and the Georgian side to conduct discussions on the formulation of principles of return faced an impasse because of the rigid position of Moscow, Sokhumi and Tskhinvali.

During the seventeenth round, the representatives of the Georgian side, the Co-Chairmen and the United States made it crystal clear that they are concerned at the illegal arrests and prosecutions of local population who cross the administrative boundary lines. The Tskhinvali proxy regime currently detains 16 persons, who must be urgently and unconditionally freed. Georgia once again calls on the international community to pay attention to the fates of these people and continues to raise this issue in its talks with official Moscow.

The participants agreed that the eighteenth round of the Geneva talks would be held on 14 December 2011.